

giving the Democratic ticket no opposition. Therefore, with the changes to the charter made by the legislature at the recommendation of the city's leaders, the coup was affirmed, and those men brought to power as a result were legitimized in their positions for another two years in office.<sup>58</sup>

To further solidify Democratic control over county governments statewide, on March 6, 1899, the legislature ratified "An Act to Restore Good Government to the Counties of North Carolina." The act applied to New Hanover and 12 other counties, primarily those with black majorities or near majorities. The law removed the election of county commissioners from popular vote and placed the responsibility with justices of the peace appointed by the General Assembly. This Act singly rejected local self rule by popular vote as created by Fusionists and replaced it with local government controlled by the legislature. Democrats, as a result, were able to ensure the success of their agenda and their candidates in future elections.<sup>59</sup>

The Democrats also laid plans to carry the 1900 elections. The legislature of 1899 moved quickly to revise statewide election laws for the 1900 elections. At the head of the Democrats' election reform agenda was a plan to vest control over elections in both a seven-man State Board of Elections and in local county boards of elections. The new boards would have the

power to appoint registrars and other election officials and redraw precinct lines as they saw fit. Further control over voting structure came as the Democrats redefined registration processes to make voter qualification and registration more difficult and make challenges to voter eligibility easier for Democrats.<sup>60</sup>

Fulfilling campaign promises, the Democratic legislature passed its first measures to legislate segregation. The first of the new Jim Crow laws—segregation of train compartments—was passed by the 1899 legislature after debate and discussion over wording. The action ushered in a series of "separate but equal" legislation efforts wherein virtually all aspects of interaction between African Americans and whites were legally codified.<sup>61</sup> In Wilmington, Jim Crow legislation was immediately applied to the trains and trolleys but was later applied to other aspects of life, including the courts. In 1903, a local court judge ruled that blacks and whites must use separate Bibles when being sworn in to give testimony.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Public Laws of North Carolina, 1899*; McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 784-5.

<sup>61</sup> Legislation associated with Jim Crow, or segregation, eventually applied to all aspects of life. Politicians sought to segregate textbooks for schools, cadavers sent to white and black medical schools, all public facilities and, eventually, they sought to force blacks into separate housing and communities. Helen Edmunds, *Negro in Fusion Politics*, 189-190; James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*, 137; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 100-102; Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 253-254; Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 429.

<sup>62</sup> Wilmington whites consistently reworked the rules for segregating the city's street cars and, in 1907, after passage of a new street car law, blacks boycotted the system, reducing patronage by 50 to 75 percent. The transportation companies were concerned about the impact the boycott might have but were reassured that it would not last because similar boycotts in other cities had been only temporary. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 268-269.

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<sup>58</sup> The new Board of Aldermen were C. L. Spencer, J. M. Woolard, William E. Springer, Henry P. West, Hugh MacRae, J. A. Taylor, C. W. Worth, John Harriss, C. C. Parker, F. A. Montgomery, and J. F. Littleton. Alfred Moore Waddell was unanimously elected mayor. Minutes of the Wilmington Board of Aldermen, 1899, State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), March 14 – 24, 1899.

<sup>59</sup> McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 775-776; House Journal, 1899; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), March 1-6, 1899.